

## Donna at Gateway Community and Technical College Gateway Health Profession Opportunity Project

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Donna is a 53-year-old woman who moved to Kentucky from Tennessee two months prior to her enrollment as a student in Gateway's Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) program funded by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance. She worked as a Nurse Aid (NA) in Tennessee many years ago, but some life issues recently created a barrier that prevented her from working. Even though Donna was not working, she never let go of her passion to work with the elderly. Once she completed her move to Kentucky, she decided to enroll as a student at Gateway Community and Technical College to become an NA and pursue her dream. She had never attended college before and was nervous about how she would do in the class, but her confidence in herself and faith in God helped her overcome her fears.

Donna came to Gateway's Urban Center one day to talk to someone about how to enroll in the NA class. The Admissions Office sent her up to the HPOG suite for help with the NA class, and she met the case manager and learned more about the program. At the time, Donna was on a fixed income, unemployed, and living with a friend until she could find employment. After her conversation with the HPOG case manager, she saw HPOG as the extra support she needed to be successful.

Unfortunately, since Donna did not know how to use a computer, she was unable to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the required background check to apply for the program. She felt very discouraged at that point, but with the HPOG case manager's assistance, she was able to complete these tasks online and apply for HPOG that day. She also learned that she would receive financial support from the HPOG program, which was essential for her to take the NA class.

Four weeks into the NA class, Donna became homeless. After discussing her options with the case manager, she temporarily moved in with another friend so she could complete her class and find a job. Later, once employed, Donna would be working with the community housing resources introduced to her by the HPOG case manager to find a permanent place to call her own.

With her positive personality, Donna gave many other students the encouragement and strength to get through the class. She shared with everyone her love of God and cooking, and she cooked full meals to bring in for her peers, instructor, and HPOG staff. Despite the challenges that she faced while in the class, she overcame them all through her perseverance. Donna even did her special praise dance in class to show her excitement when she passed her NA class. The nursing home where she did her clinical practice was so impressed with her work ethic and personality that they hope to hire her as a State Registered Nurse Aid as soon as Donna's Kentucky Nurse Aid Test (KNAT) test results are received.

On the last day of class, Donna talked about her experience with HPOG and Gateway's NA program: "I am so grateful for the help HPOG has given me. Without HPOG and my instructor, I don't know if I would have completed the program. I'm not going to stop here, though. I'm going to continue taking classes because I know I can do it."

## **Toni at Gateway Community and Technical College Gateway Health Profession Opportunity Project**

Toni was a single mom in her early thirties who had been living and working in Atlanta as a successful hair stylist. Her recent divorce had rattled her life, and she knew it was time to take a new direction in order to be self-sufficient. Toni was lucky to have supportive parents who agreed to help her. Her parents agreed to provide childcare, a safe home in Northern Kentucky, and food on the table if she could get herself through school. She signed up at Gateway Community and Technical College to take the Nurse Assistant program in the spring of 2012.

Luckily Toni qualified for the HPOG program to assist her in her classes. She received tuition assistance, a textbook, and one-on-one help in Nurse Assistant skills performance, and HPOG paid for her state Nurse Assistant exam. HPOG staff were there to support her throughout the course as she was taking the first step toward pursuing her Registered Nurse degree. Toni took the assistance and added her own hard work and perseverance to achieve the highest grade in her class and pass the state test.

In July of 2012, the career and placement staff hosted a Nurse Aid job fair and invited several agencies to participate. Employers were invited to set up tables with recruitment and hiring materials. Work space was available for students to fill out job applications, and classroom space was also available for on-the-spot interviews. Senior Helpers of Northern Kentucky (NKY) interviewed Toni that day on campus, and by the following weekend, Toni had been offered a job and was shadowing another employee as part of her training.

Toni recently stopped by the HPOG program office to share that she loves her job! She likes her co-workers, her supervisors, and her clients and their families. The job is providing supplemental income to help her feel more self-sufficient, and she is able to continue with her schooling to become a Registered Nurse.

Senior Helpers NKY was excited to participate in an event that provided a quality applicant on the spot. The agency is incredibly pleased with Toni's work ethic and clinical skills. She hit the ground running and has made a significant difference in the lives of her clients and their families. Senior Helpers NKY will continue to communicate with HPOG for employee referrals, attend career events, and be part of Gateway's HPOG Employer Board.